

SUMMER 2013

# BGU & YOU

NEWSLETTER OF BEN-GURION UNIVERSITY OF THE NEGEV

אוניברסיטת בן-גוריון בנגב



Serving People is  
Good for Business



Asher Heled Esq.  
Confirmed as New  
Chairman of BGU's  
Executive Committee



A Family Affair –  
the 43rd Board of  
Governors Meeting



Aaron Klug Integrated  
Centre for Biomolecular  
Structure and Function  
Dedicated

## BGU-UChicago to Develop Cutting-Edge Water Technologies



Prof. Robert J. Zimmer and Prof. Rivka Carmi sign the collaboration agreement while Mayor Rahm Emanuel, City of Chicago, and President of the State of Israel Shimon Peres look on

Special insert included –  
**Spotlight on Scholarships**

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Ben-Gurion University of the Negev and the University of Chicago signed an agreement in the presence of Israeli President Shimon Peres and City of Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel to create a partnership focused on innovative water technologies. The cooperation will start by funding “game-changing” projects that hope to develop new processes for making clean, fresh drinking water more plentiful and less expensive by 2020.

President Peres spoke about the importance of water and Israel's leadership role worldwide in protecting and developing water, particularly because the country is primarily desert. “David Ben-Gurion once said ‘To be a realist, one must believe

in miracles’.” Thanking the “two great universities” for working together to use science to produce water for the benefit of humanity and future generations, he concluded that, “This is a realistic miracle. God bless you.”

BGU President Rivka Carmi and University of Chicago President Robert J. Zimmer signed the agreement, noting that generally signings come at the end of a project, but in this case, it marks a beginning. Joint research projects will explore innovative solutions at the water-energy nexus, developing more efficient ways of using water to produce energy and using energy to treat and deliver clean water.



## BGU-UChicago to Develop Cutting-Edge Water Technologies *(cont. from page 1)*



L-R: Prof. Matthew Tirrel, Prof. Rivka Carmi, Mayor Rahm Emanuel, Prof. Robert J. Zimmer, Prof. Moshe Gottlieb, Roey Gilead

“Clean, plentiful water is a strategic issue in the Middle East and the world at large, and a central research focus of our university for more than three decades,” said Carmi. “We believe that this partnership will enhance state-of-the-art science in both universities, while having a profound effect on the sustainable availability of clean water to people around the globe.”

Noting that BGU researchers have been at the forefront of water research in Israel through the Zuckerberg Institute for Water Research (ZIWR) and the Ilse Katz Institute for Nanoscale Science and Technology (IKI), “We have a lot of expertise that we are bringing to this collaboration that starts with our background in reverse osmosis desalination and we are now at the cutting-edge through developments in nanotechnology,” she said.

“We feel it is critical to bring outstanding scientists together to address water resource challenges that are being felt

around the world and will only become more acute over time,” said Zimmer. “Our purification challenges in the Great Lakes region right now are different from some of the scarcity issues that some of our colleagues at Ben-Gurion are addressing, but our combined experience will be a tremendous asset in turning early-stage technologies into innovative solutions that may have applications far beyond local issues.”

University of Chicago also brings to the effort two powerful research partners already committed to clean-water research – the Argonne National Laboratory in Lemont, Illinois, and the Marine Biological Laboratory in Woods Hole, Massachusetts.

Roey Gilead, Israel’s Consul General to the Midwest and City of Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel hailed the collaboration as an example of the potential for collaborative innovation that can improve quality of life and boost economic vitality.

“Chicago’s worldwide leadership in water management continues to grow as we invest in our water infrastructure, creating jobs for our residents and economic activity in our neighborhoods. I strongly support this partnership and I look forward to working with leading institutions like BGU and the University of Chicago to create innovations and opportunities for the future,” he said.

The institutions have moved swiftly following the signing of a memorandum of understanding in Chicago on March 8 to explore a research partnership focused on innovative water production and purification technologies. Leading the efforts are Prof. Moshe Gottlieb, BGU’s Frankel Professor of Chemical Engineering and the founding director of the IKI, and Prof. Matthew Tirrell, the Pritzker Director of the University of Chicago’s new Institute for Molecular Engineering.

At the press conference following the signing, Tirrell outlined the Institute’s decision to commit tens of millions of dollars to develop the field over the next decade. “The Institute for Molecular Engineering aims to bring molecular-level science to technological problems of global importance,” Tirrell said. “Water technology clearly meets that standard.”

BGU, UChicago and Argonne have jointly committed more than \$1 million in seed money over the next two years to support at least five inaugural projects, with the first projects getting underway this fall.

“Water supply and scarcity issues have always been on the mind of people in this region,” Gottlieb said. “Water research and technology development have been part of BGU for four decades. On these solid foundations, we plan to build the next level of technologies.”

# Serving People is Good for Business



Chairman of the board and CEO of Deichmann SE Company Heinrich Deichmann stressed how absolutely essential business ethics are in running companies when he delivered the annual Dr. Heinz-Horst Deichmann Chair for Distinguished Visiting Professors in Business

Ethics lecture recently at the Guilford Glazer Faculty of Business and Management.

Speaking to an avid crowd of master's and PhD students, Deichmann, who heads Europe's largest footwear retail chain – which just marked its 100th anniversary – spoke about company behavior based on Christian ethics.

Deichmann is the grandson of the founder of the multi-national company and the son of the former CEO of the company and cherished supporter and Vice-Chairperson of BGU's Board of Governors, Dr. Heinz-Horst Deichmann.

“A company must serve people, especially those in need,” he told the audience. He noted that although the temptation to raise prices always exists, it is part of a company's ethical responsibility not to raise prices beyond what certain populations can afford.

He stressed the ever increasing importance of running a business ethically, which for him, derives from the Bible. Using his company as a model, he pointed to the built-in checks and balances and the ombudsman's office, as well as the non-profit foundation his family has established, as desired elements for large companies.

“Business and economy are there to serve people and not people serving business and economy,” he cautioned. Deichmann, his wife Susana, and his brother-in-law Daniel Lachish also met with Dean Prof. Oded Lowengart to discuss the nature of pricing, one of the dean's research interests.

Deichmann's sister, Ute, is a Professor of History and Philosophy of Science in the Department of Philosophy at BGU. She is also the director of the Jacques Loeb Centre for the History and Philosophy of the Life Sciences.

# Asher Heled Esq. Confirmed as New Chairman of BGU's Executive Committee

Asher Heled Esq. was confirmed as the new chairman of the Executive Committee during the 43rd Board of Governors Meeting. He has been a member of BGU's Board of Governors since 1996 and served on the Executive Committee for many years.

Born in Israel in 1948, Heled is the managing partner of Asher Heled & Co. Law Office in Tel Aviv. He founded the firm in 1978 and has managed it ever since.

Heled is one of the foremost experts on labor law and pension funds and has represented clients in precedent-setting

cases before the National Labor Court and the Supreme Court. He is also a trained arbitrator and mediator and a speaker at professional conferences in Israel and abroad. He is a member of the Executive Board and Treasurer of the Israeli Society for Labor Law and Social Security, the Israeli branch of the International Society for Labor and Social Security Law.

“I am very happy with this worthy appointment, which will, without a doubt, support the University's development,” said BGU President Rivka Carmi.



Asher Heled Esq.



## A Family Affair — The 43rd Board of Governors Meeting

*Guests from around the world came together to enjoy the multi-generational event*



*The University administration at the Opening Plenary Session*



*Guests arrive at the American Associates reception*

The atmosphere was upbeat during the 43rd Board of Governors Meeting, which brought together over 300 University friends and supporters from around the world. Long-time supporters were joined by new friends, with a noteworthy number of participants bringing children and grandchildren along.

At the Opening Plenary Session, Chairman of the Board of Governors **Alex Goren** welcomed the returning delegates, as well as the new ones. "It's exciting to see new faces here. We are all honored to be part of the success story that is Ben-Gurion University of the Negev. Ben-Gurion had a dream of Oxford in the Negev and we are meeting that challenge."

During the Plenary Session, the University thanked outgoing Chairman of the Executive

Committee **Adv. Yair Green** for his dedication and commitment to BGU and ratified the appointment of **Adv. Asher Heled** in the position.

Beer-Sheva Mayor **Ruvik Danilovich** declared, "We are standing at the beginning of perhaps the most interesting and challenging decade in the city and the region's history." He pointed to the large number of students who reside in Beer-Sheva and some of the best and brightest from the IDF who will be stationed in or around the city in the coming years as the training, intelligence and communications bases migrate south. "It is a national decision of great import," he told the audience. "Beer-Sheva is the true geographical center of the country, where its citizens are fired with missionary zeal. They don't look at the 'me'; they look at the 'us'."



Beer-Sheva Mayor Ruvik Danilovich with Larry Goodman, USA



AABGU President Lloyd Goldman

President **Rikva Carmi** emphasized that this had been a "building year both physically and figuratively." She pointed to the signing of a lease on the north campus and the creation of a master plan for its development. "It is an ambitious plan that stretches our horizons, and the future is limited only by our imagination," she said.

Noting that BGU is in the midst of a \$100 million building program, she detailed how the University is expanding its international sphere of influence with major research agreements with the University of Michigan and the University of Chicago in the US and Monash University in Australia, as well as visits and agreements with universities in Singapore and China.

Delegates were treated to a witty and wry take on what it means to be Israeli

by BGU Professor (Emeritus) and famed Israeli author **Amos Oz**, incumbent of the S.Y. Agnon Chair in Contemporary Hebrew Literature. The winners of the Fifth Goldstein-Goren Award for the Best Book in Jewish Thought, 2010-2012 were announced by **Prof. Haim Kreisel**, Chairman of the Goldstein-Goren International Center for Jewish Thought and a member of the Goldstein-Goren Department of Jewish Thought.

Later in the day, Beit Fanny was dedicated adjacent to the Zlotowski Dormitory Complex in the presence of **Fanny Cohen Kohn** of Venezuela. Beit Fanny is a new WIZO daycare center for children of University employees built in a reinforced building with BGU faculty consulting on the curriculum.



Fanny Cohen Kohn, Venezuela, (far right) unveils the plaque at Beit Fanny with Prof. Rivka Carmi and the WIZO leadership

At the afternoon Happy Hour with the Student Union, students had an opportunity to show off their wide range of programs while thanking the donors who make these activities possible. Sponsored by AABGU members **Eric Benhamou, Arline** and **Ben Guefen, Micky Rahav, Harriet Sofa** and

**Aileen Whitman**, the event included Negev Beer, produced by a microbrewery founded by a BGU graduate, and a performance by the Zlotowski Dance Troupe.

President Carmi announced the launch of the President's Pillars, a new recognition

society for the University's most generous supporters, at the annual event celebrating the new members of the Ben-Gurion Society, Negev Society and University Founders.

The University saluted 40 years of Beer-Sheva's cultural institutions with a



Southern brew "Negev Beer" at Happy Hour with the Student Union



Eric Charles, UK, and Carol Saal, USA



Suzanne Zlotowski, UK, Adelene Zlotowski, Israel, and Aharon Yadlin (front row) with members of the Zlotowski Dance Troupe

gala performance of Carmina Burana, choreographed by Tamir Ginz, with the Kamea Dance Company and the Israel Sinfonietta Beer-Sheva at the Beer-Sheva Performing Arts Center.

The next morning the festivities began early with the naming of the **Lillian and Larry Goodman Open Apartments Program** in the presence of **Larry Goodman, USA**, his granddaughter **Hailey Goodman**, other family and foundation representatives, a number of Goodman Fellows and neighborhood residents.

Honorary Doctorate Recipient **Prof. Patrick Aebischer**, President, Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne (EPFL), gave a fascinating look into the World of Personalized Medicine under the auspices of the **Annual Zlotowski Lecture**, in the presence of **Suzanne Zlotowski, UK**, and **Adelene Zlotowski, Israel**. The talk was moderated by **Prof. Alon Friedman**, Director, Zlotowski Center for Neuroscience, and included the presentation of the Zlotowski Admission Award for Outstanding Students.



Larry Goodman, USA, with Fellows from the Lillian and Larry Goodman Open Apartments Program



The afternoon featured a talk and a panel with honorary doctorate recipient **Cherie Blair, CBE**, UK, who talked about the work of the Cherie Blair Foundation for Women that empowers women to become entrepreneurs and business leaders. After presenting the work of her foundation and its goals and methods, Blair took her place alongside **Prof. Dafna Schwartz** of the Guilford Glazer Faculty of Business and Management and director of the Bengis Center for Hi-Tech Management and Entrepreneurship, and local entrepreneur **Jacky Roth**, together with **Frederick Granit**, a consultant and mentor with Blair's foundation, and moderator **Dana Weiss**.

Blair spoke about the obstacles women face and the benefits for the world's economies in empowering women. She said her foundation worked to enable women in three ways: confidence – to be able to monetize something they were already doing; to enable them to have the capacity to put their idea into practice; and, finally, to have access to capital to get started.



*Prof. Patrick Aebischer, Switzerland*

"Opening up opportunities for women for economic independence has become a key driver in economies," she declared. Women tend to invest the money they earn back into the business or into their families rather than waste it, she noted.

The **Irene and Hyman Kreitman Annual Memorial Lecture** featured Israeli author **Meir Shalev**, who shared his memories of growing up in Jerusalem with his father, poet Yitzhak Shalev. The occasion coincided with the national Jerusalem Day holiday, making his topic timely as well as insightful.

Six distinguished guests were recognized for their achievements and contributions at the honorary doctorate ceremony. They included **Prof. Patrick Aebischer**, Switzerland; **Cherie Blair, CBE**, UK; **Prof. Joshua Blau**, Israel; **Prof. Mario Capecchi**, USA; **Ruth Flinkman-Marandy**, USA and **Prof. Robert Langer**, USA.

Vice-Chairman of the Board of Governors **Bertie Lubner**, South Africa, received the Lifetime Achievement Award in the presence of his extended family, who were on hand for the ceremony. Speaking at the event, he recalled the humble beginnings of the University, which has flourished and become "the water in the desert its own way."



*L-R: Prof. Dafna Schwartz, Cherie Blair, Jacky Roth and Dana Weiss at the panel on empowering women*





L-R: Mitchell Oelbaum, Robert Elman, Joyce Gampel, Mark Mendelson, Naomi Oelbaum, Canada

On Wednesday, the scene shifted to Sede Boqer, where the **Swiss Institute for Dryland Environmental and Energy Research, the Bona Terra Department of Man in the Desert, and the Alexandre Yersin Department of Solar Energy and Environmental Physics** were dedicated in the presence of **H.E. Andreas Baum**, Ambassador of Switzerland to Israel, **Michel Halpérin**, President, Swiss Associates, and **Daniel Guggenheim**, President, Bona Terra Foundation, as well as a very strong contingent of guests from Switzerland.

Baum remarked how lucky Switzerland was to be able to take pride in the actions of its private citizens in creating such a marvelous institute. **Prof. Boris Zaltzman**, Director of the Swiss Institute, gave a presentation outlining the cutting edge laboratories, forward-thinking degree programs and other improvements the Institute is set to enact in the coming years.

The Board of Governors Meeting culminated with the festive Chairman's Gala, sponsored by the Israeli Friends of BGU.



Sheila Savitt and her granddaughter

## Goldstein-Goren Prize Announced

The winners of the Fifth Goldstein-Goren International Prize for the Most Important Book in Jewish Thought 2010-2012 were announced by Prof. Haim Kreisel, Chairman of the Goldstein-Goren International Center for Jewish Thought, in the presence of Chairman of the Board of Governors Alex Goren and Micaela Goren-Monti at the Opening Plenary Session.

Despite the seeming downturn in the popularity of printed books, "We had a record number of submissions of printed books in the humanistic field of Jewish thought, over 80 in number both in Hebrew and in English, most of them of exceptionally high quality," Kreisel explained. "Our blue ribbon panel who had to judge all these books consisted of three internationally recognized experts in the field: Prof. Larry Kaplan from McGill University, Prof. Ada Rapoport Albert from the University of London, and our own Israel Prize laureate Professor Emeritus Gerald Blidstein, incumbent of the Miriam Martha Hubert Chair in Jewish Law, who served as the chair.

"From these books they chose four finalists, and from the finalists – two winners who will share the \$30,000 prize," he said.

The winners are *The Intellectual History and Rabbinic Culture of Medieval Ashkenaz* by Ephraim Kanarfogel, (Wayne State University Press), and *Break the Vessels: Kabbalah and Jewish Modernity* by Roni Weinstein (Tel Aviv University Press), in Hebrew.



## The Swiss Institute for Dryland Environmental and Energy Research Dedicated at the BIDR



L-R: Prof. Rivka Carmi, Prof. Daniel Guggenheim, Michel Halpérin, Prof. Pedro Berliner

The Swiss Institute for Dryland Environmental and Energy Research (SIDEER) was dedicated during the 43rd Board of Governors Meeting in the presence of a large Swiss delegation. The Institute is one of three that comprise the Jacob Blaustein Institutes for Desert Research in Sede Boqer.

"Switzerland and Israel have strong bilateral relations that are gaining strength," said Swiss Ambassador to Israel, H.E. Andreas Baum, speaking at the event. "We are looking forward to potential cooperation in the future, to scientific partnerships and exchanges," he added.

He also thanked the private Swiss supporters of the Institute. "We are very proud and lucky as we benefit from private donors," he said.

BIDR Director Prof. Pedro Berliner moderated the event while presenting a general update about the Institutes. President Prof. Rivka Carmi stressed the international nature of the Sede Boqer campus.

"Graduates of the Albert Katz International School for Desert Studies (AKIS) change the world on the ground. It is an international campus in all regards – supported by international friends and attended by international students. We are turning this campus into an international hub and you will be proud of your investment," she said. AKIS was created with the generous support of the late Ilse Katz and the Negev Foundation, both from Switzerland.

Michel Halpérin, President of the Swiss Associates, remarked: "It is important to be here in Sede Boqer. It is a place like no

other. It is a combination of science and imagination. The quality of research and the topics addressed are totally challenging from a human standpoint. The place of Switzerland is natural. Switzerland needs the desert and the desert needs the alpine. We brought the waterfalls," he quipped.

The ceremony also featured the naming of two departments in the Institute: the Bona Terra Department of Man in the Desert and the Alexandre Yersin Department of Solar Energy and Environmental Physics.

Prof. Daniel Guggenheim, President of the Bona Terra Foundation, observed, "There is a parallel between Switzerland and Israel. Both have had to face difficult land conditions. Both made a success of these existential conditions. Let us hope that other countries will be able to overcome their challenges through the Swiss Institute."

# Honoring our Friends

BGU honored the exceptional commitment of its donors at the unveiling ceremony of new names on the University's recognition walls. The event welcomed new members of the Ben-Gurion Society for their munificent support and recognized its most dedicated supporters – including members of the Negev Society and Founders – and acknowledged new members of the Living Legacy Society.

*Thank you!*



Yael Sarig, representative of the Moshal Scholarship Program, and Prof. Rivka Carmi unveil the names on the Tamar Wall



(L-R) Uri Carmi, representative of the Schulich Fund, Marc List (Zin Fellow – Cohort I), Prof. Rivka Carmi, Dodik Shoshani, representing the Tamar Golan estate, Eyal Carmel representing Microsoft, and Zehavka Shoshani, unveiling names on the Eshkol Wall



Dr. Lynn Schler representing the Stibbe Family with Prof. Rivka Carmi



## BGU Lauds **Seven Outstanding Individuals** for their Change-Making Accomplishments



(L-R) Prof. Robert Langer, Bertie Lubner, Cherie Blair CBE, Ruth Flinkman-Marandy, Prof. Mario Capecchi, Prof. Joshua Blau, Prof. Patrick Aebischer

The University honored seven stellar individuals from a wide variety of fields during the 43rd Board of Governors Meeting.

**Prof. Patrick Aebischer**, Switzerland, is the President of Ecole Polytechnique de Lausanne (EPL), one of the two Swiss Federal Institutes of Technology. He is a Fellow of the American Institute for Medical and Biological Engineering and the Swiss Academies of Medical Sciences and Engineering Sciences.

A professor of neurosciences and head of the Neurodegenerative Disease Laboratory at the EPL, he has significantly expanded

the Institute since assuming its presidency in 2000. Aebischer has also founded three biotechnology companies: Amazentis SA, Modex Therapeutiques Inc. and CytoTherapeutics Inc.

**Cherie Blair CBE**, UK, is a Queen's Counsel and Recorder. She established the Cherie Blair Foundation for Women to advance female entrepreneurs as an avenue to empowerment. The foundation supports women in Asia, Africa and the Middle East and provides them with training and funding to increase women's security and their voice in tackling injustice. She has also been active on the issues of breast cancer,

children from disadvantaged communities and prison reform.

Blair was appointed Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (CBE) in the 2013 New Year Honours for services to women's issues and charity. In 2000, she was one of the founding partners of Matrix Chambers, which was created to focus on human rights law. She is married to Tony Blair, former UK prime minister and current Quartet Envoy to the Middle East.

**Prof. Joshua Blau**, Israel, is one of the world's foremost scholars on medieval

Judeo-Arabic. Incumbent of the Max Schloessinger Professor Emeritus of Arabic Language at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, he was also the third president of the Academy of the Hebrew Language from 1981-1993.

The nonagenarian is a recipient of the Israel Prize and a number of awards from European countries and a member of the Israel Academy of Sciences. He has published widely on the Hebrew and Arabic languages, both modern and medieval.

**Prof. Mario Capecchi**, USA, is the 2007 Nobel Laureate in Physiology and Medicine. He is best known for his pioneering work on the development of gene targeting in mouse embryo-derived stem (ES) cells. This technology allows scientists to create mice with mutations in any desired gene, enabling them to choose which gene to mutate and how to mutate it. The researcher has virtually complete freedom on how to manipulate the DNA sequences in the genome of living mice, enabling scientists to evaluate the function of any gene during the development or post-developmental phase of the mouse. Capecchi is Distinguished Professor of Human Genetics and Biology at the University of Utah and its School of Medicine. He is also an Investigator at the Howard Hughes Medical Institute. His success is all the more noteworthy given his unique childhood experiences.

**Ruth Flinkman-Marandy**, USA, is president of Flinkman Management, Inc., a family-owned real estate management company in Santa Monica, California. In addition to being a national vice president on the board of American Associates, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev (AABGU), she was elected to BGU's Board of Governors in May 2012. Flinkman-Marandy has also been the campaign chair for

AABGU's Southwest Region for several years. She first became involved with BGU more than 30 years ago.

A member of BGU's Ben-Gurion Society, Flinkman-Marandy has been a strong supporter of the University's Nano in the Negev initiative for many years, and has also supported student scholarships. Most recently, Ruth and her husband, Ben Marandy, pledged a significant amount to support a new atom chip and quantum optics research and development facility for the University's Nano-Fabrication Center.

**Prof. Robert Langer**, USA, is one of only three Americans to have been awarded the US National Medal of Science and the US National Medal of Technology and Innovation. He is also a past recipient of the Charles Stark Draper Prize, considered the equivalent of the Nobel Prize for engineers, and the Millennium Prize, the world's most important technology prize. He is a 2013 recipient of the Wolf Prize. He is a member of the US National Academy of Sciences, the US National Academy of Engineering and the Institute of Medicine – one of the few to be elected to all three and the youngest in history to have been so honored.

Langer is the David H. Koch Institute Professor at MIT, where he has been teaching since 1977. He has written more than 1,190 articles and has 810 issued and pending patents worldwide, which have been granted to over 250 companies. The biomedical engineer has developed novel drug delivery systems, including time delayed ones, and polymers that help prevent tumors from recruiting blood vessels, among many other systems. He is the co-founder of InVivo Therapeutics Corporation, which develops technologies to treat spinal cord injuries.

### Lifetime Achievement Award

**Bertie Lubner**, South Africa, was asked to become the president of the South African Associates of BGU in 1975 by the second president of BGU Yoseph Tekoah, thus beginning a relationship with the University that has been mutually satisfying for nearly 40 years. A successful businessman, Lubner has always made philanthropy an important part of his life and inculcated that belief in his children as well. Both in South Africa and in Israel, he and his family have supported causes close to their heart, most notably children, special needs, and research that would benefit them.

In South Africa, Lubner has been at the forefront of promoting South African business and business opportunities for South Africans for decades. He has been awarded South Africa's highest honor, the Order of Meritorious Special Service for his contribution to the country's economy.

As a philanthropist, he founded, with the late Chief Rabbi Cyril Harris, Afrika Tikken, which looks after 18,000 beneficiaries in six townships. He and his brother Ronnie founded the Field Band Foundation, which now supports 42 bands, incorporating 6,000 children. The Lubner family also set up the Lubner Kibbutz for mentally challenged adults.

At BGU, always encouraging the application of academic study to the real world, he sponsors the Lubner Family Annual Prize for Excellence in Innovation and Research Endowment Fund, the Lubner Family Chair in Child Health and Development at Soroka University Medical Center and the Lubner Prize for Community Service. He was awarded an honorary doctorate by the University in 1987. His name graces the Founders Wall at BGU and he is a member of the Ben-Gurion Society.



*The delegation from Switzerland at the Ben-Gurion gravesite*



*Hilary and Bertie Lubner with family members, Vice President Amos Drory and Prof. Samuel Appelbaum in Sede Boqer*



The delegation from Switzerland, including the Swiss Ambassador to Israel H.E. Andreas Baum at the Ben-Gurion gravesite



L-R: Alex Goren, USA, Prof. Zvi HaCohen, and Ellen Marcus, USA



Morton and Arline Doblin, USA, with Prof. Rivka Carmi



The Chairman's Council: Back row L-R: Lionel Halpérin, Switzerland, Jacques Halpérin, Belgium, Steve Breslauer, USA, Harold Paisner, UK, Gary Fine, Canada. Front row L-R: Michel Halpérin, Switzerland, Ellen Marcus, USA, Prof. Amos Drony, Alex Goren, USA, Prof. Rivka Carmi, Bertie Lubner, South Africa, Carol Saal, USA, Lloyd Goldman, USA, Eric Charles, UK



Members of the American Associates, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev visit the building site of the American Associates Village at Sede Boqer





Micaela Goren-Monti at the Ben-Gurion gravesite



Ricky and Zvi Alon, USA



Back row L-R: Michael Flinkman, Ruth Flinkman-Marandy, Ben Marandy, Lewis Flinkman, Leah Bell, Russell Flinkman. Front row L-R: Yvonne and Philip Gomperts, Larry Field, Riki Seidel, USA



## Israelis Remember Loved Ones through Dedicated Scholarship Funds

Some 50 representatives of Israeli scholarship endowment funds came to meet “their” students at the annual event in their honor. Organized by the Office of the Dean of Students, the family atmosphere combined with the warm memories of loved ones makes this an emotional event. Students are happy to be able to meet the people behind the scholarships that help them realize their aspirations.

This year MK Shulamit Moalem of the Jewish Home party spoke at the event. She created a scholarship fund in memory of Lt. Colonel Moshe Moalem, her late husband and BGU alumnus, in 1999. He was killed in the IDF helicopter disaster of 1997, in which two helicopters collided over She’ar Yeshuv in northern Israel and crashed, killing all 73 soldiers on board. He had received his undergraduate degree from the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering.



Representatives of the Holtzman and Kenzefold Funds, with students Ovadia and Hiam



Prof. Rivka Carmi with Ruth Soninio



MK Shulamit Moalem and Moalem Scholarship recipient Michael, a first-year undergraduate student in the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering

## Rivka Carmi and Oxford Brookes Scholarships Recipients Named



Prof. Raymond and Sandra Dwek meet with Efrat Ben-Eliezer and Prof. Rivka Carmi

"We are extremely happy to see the continuation of the scholarships this year," said Raymond and Sandra Dwek during the 43rd Board of Governors Meeting. "Last year's students took an active approach to promoting British-Israel relations, while making the most of the academic experience offered to them."

The Dweks had a chance to meet with the new students who will leave for the UK this summer. Efrat Ben-Eliezer, recipient of the second Rivka Carmi Scholarship will study Medical Anthropology at Exeter College, Oxford.

"For me, Oxford is the pinnacle," explained Efrat. "The Rivka Carmi Scholarship is the jewel in the crown which will allow me to fully concentrate on my academic work and professional goals. I am very grateful for the opportunity that has been given to me and hope to put it to good use."

The Rivka Carmi Scholarship is the first such partnership between the University of Oxford and an Israeli university and was made possible through the initiative of Prof. Raymond Dwek of Oxford. The scholarship

has been generously funded by BGU's Vice Chairman of the Board Sir Ronald Cohen through the Ben-Gurion University Foundation in London.

Yasmeen Haj-Amar received the "Scholarship for Israel" to Oxford Brookes University. She completed an undergraduate degree in English literature and linguistics at BGU and is in the middle of her master's in English literature. Haj-Amar is also an English teacher in the Amal Kseifa Abu Rabiya High School in the Bedouin town of Kseifa.

"It's like a dream to go to Oxford Brookes. I thank God for that. It will give me new information and knowledge. I will do my best to do well there," she says. At Oxford Brookes, she will be studying for a master's in Education.

The Oxford Brookes Scholarship is the brainchild of members of the Oxford Jewish Congregation, in particular Sandra Dwek. The funds were raised entirely by friends and well-wishers nationally and abroad and from individuals in the Oxford Jewish community.

## Prof. Iris Shai Appointed as Presidential Adviser on the Advancement of Women

Prof. Iris Shai has been appointed as presidential adviser on the advancement of women in academia. She has replaced Prof. Vered Slonim-Nevo, who filled the role for the past 13 years. The Council for Higher Education in Israel created a committee headed by BGU President Prof. Rivka Carmi to examine the status of women in academia and to formulate the recommendations required to promote gender equality in the higher education system.

"An academic career is not easy for both men and women, but women, especially at the beginning, and some along the way, deal with other tasks, which make things even more difficult," explains Carmi. "I see great importance in promoting gender equality in general and in academia in particular."

A mother of four, Shai is a member of the Faculty of Health Sciences investigating nutrition and the epidemiology of biological markers of chronic diseases. Since returning in 2004 from her postdoctoral work at Harvard University, she has led an international research group specializing in clinical trials dealing with the effect of different nutritional strategies and specific nutritional components (such as wine), the mechanisms of diabetes control, and the withdrawal and transport of atherosclerotic tissue body fat.



# Snapshots

A glance at events at BGU



More than 1,500 people, including leaders in Israel's hi-tech community, participated in the Innovation 2013 Un-Conference organized by the Bengis Center for Entrepreneurship and Hi-Tech Management



Israeli President Shimon Peres hears about BGU spin-off EIMinda at the President's Conference in June



Innovation 2013 Un-Conference



Recipients of the Toronto Prize for Excellence in Research at the Rector's end-of-the-year concert (L-R): Dean for Research and Development Prof. Moti Herskowitz, Haim Permuter, Electrical and Computer Engineering, Dr. Esti Yager-Lotem, Clinical Biochemistry and Pharmacology, President Rivka Carmi, Dr. Sarab Abu-Rabia, Desert Sociology, Rector Zvi HaCohen, Dr. Michael Elkin, Computer Sciences



## A Degree of Excellence for 6,000 New Graduates



Friends and family were on hand as 161 graduates received their PhDs from the Kreitman School



The proud father shares his enthusiasm with his son

More than 6,019 new alumni received their degrees over the past month in a series of spirited ceremonies on the Marcus Family Campus that reinforce the overall BGU family atmosphere. There are now more than 107,000 University alumni making a difference around the world.

The season opened with the 31st graduating class of the Joyce and Irving Goldman Medical School, which granted 66 M.D. Degrees. Next, the 12th class of the Medical School for International Health in collaboration with Columbia University Medical Center graduated 41 new doctors. The Kreitman School of Advanced Graduate Studies awarded 161 new doctoral degrees, reinforcing BGU's role as a leading research university.

Overall, some 3,749 undergraduate degrees and 1,814 master's degrees were awarded with an additional 188 students receiving teaching certificates.



MSIH students graduated in style

# Excellence recognized



Prof. David Newman

## Prof. David Newman Receives OBE

Buckingham Palace has announced that Prof. David Newman, Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences and a member of the Department of Politics and Government, is among those people being presented an award by Queen Elizabeth as part of her Birthday Honours list this year. Newman will receive an Order of the British Empire (OBE) for his promotion of academic partnership between Britain and Israel. He has been a leading advocate of academic partnership between the two countries, and a key campaigner against attempts by some in British academia to boycott Israel.

Newman works in the field of political geography and is currently the senior editor of the *International Journal of Geopolitics*. He is a participant in a 19-university European consortium (funded by the EU) titled EUROBOARDERSCAPES.

## Prof. Ariel Feldestein Receives Lifetime Achievement Award

Academic Secretary Prof. Ariel Feldestein received the Prime Minister and President of Israel's Lifetime Achievement Award for his efforts to commemorate the memory

and heritage of Israel's first Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion. According to the judges, his role was significant in "perpetuating the memory and legacy of late Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion." The award was announced by the Presidents and Prime Ministers Memorial Council Prize committee, headed by Prof. Arieh Naor, a prominent scholar who was a cabinet secretary to late Prime Minister Menachem Begin and head of the Jabotinsky Institute in Israel.

Feldestein, a historian who specializes in Zionism and the shaping of collective memory, primarily in relation to the Zionist narrative, has been serving as Ben-Gurion University's academic secretary since 2011. He is also the volunteer chair of the Public Council for the Commemoration of [Zionist founder] Theodor Herzl.

## BGU to Lead **Conversions** **I-CORE**

Ben-Gurion University has been chosen to lead an Israeli Center of Research Excellence (I-CORE) for the Study of Conversion and Inter-Religious Encounters, as part of the Israeli government's initiative to encourage stellar research. This is the first I-CORE to be led by BGU and one of four announced in May in which BGU researchers will participate.

**Prof. Chaim Hames**, chair of the Department of General History will head the new center. The scientific committee includes BGU's **Dr. Ephraim (Effie) Shoham-Steiner** of the Department of Jewish History, **Dr. Ram Ben Shalom** from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and **Dr. Dov Stuczynski** from Bar-Ilan University. Other BGU members include **Prof. Daniel Lasker**, incumbent of the Blechner Chair in Jewish Tradition and Values, and **Dr. Avraham Reiner**, of the Goldstein-Goren Department of Jewish Thought, **Prof.**

**Yair Neuman**, chair of the Department of Education, and **Dr. Nimrod Hurwitz** from the Department of Middle East Studies.

One of the major projects includes the creation of a database (the first of its kind) that will attempt to record every known instance of conversion from one religion to another during the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Period. These materials will be translated into English so that the database will be useful for those without the linguistic training necessary to read the primary sources.

BGU researchers will be participating in three additional I-CORES. **Prof. Nelly Elias**, chair, and **Prof. Amit Schejter** of the Department of Communications, and **Dr. Iris Tabak** of the Department of Education, will be partners in a University of Haifa-based I-CORE "Learning in a Networked Society (LINKS): Co-creation of Knowledge in Technology-Enhanced Communities of Learning." Schejter is a member of the scientific management committee.

**Prof. Dudy Bar-Zvi**, incumbent of the Israel and Bernard Nichunsky Chair in Desert Agriculture and a member of the Department of Life Sciences is a member of the scientific management team of an I-CORE titled "Comprehensive understanding and modeling of plant responses to multiple abrupt abiotic stresses and to prolonged climatic changes." **Prof. Moshe Sagi** of BGU's French Associates Institute for Agriculture and Biotechnology of Drylands is also a member of the center.

**Prof. Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin** and **Prof. Haviva Pedaya**, head of the J.R. Elyachar Center for Studies in Sephardi Heritage from the Department of Jewish History will be partners in a Hebrew University-based I-CORE "Da'at Hamakom": Center for the Study of Cultures of Place in the Modern Jewish World."

## Researcher Receives **Krill Prize** for Young Scientists

**Dr. Ya'akov (Kobi) Gal** received the 2014 Krill Prize for academic excellence among young Israeli scientists, which is granted annually by the Wolf Foundation. His research focuses on designing "intelligent agents" – algorithms that run on computers, robots and smart phones and interact with other people as well as computers. The goal of his research is to enable computers to understand how humans make decisions and to use this information to foster cooperation with their human counterparts in domains such as strategic negotiation and education.


The member of the Department of Information Systems Engineering believes that the future role for intelligent agents is not to replace human professionals, a fear that is still conveyed by many today, but rather to "share the problem solving" with the humans in the loop in a way that best utilizes people's abilities. To advance this cause, he synthesizes techniques and approaches from computer science, economics and psychology in novel ways.

## **BGU Delegation Signs Agreement to Protect Endangered Diversity of the Galapagos Islands**

A delegation from the BIDR, led by **Prof. Ariel Novoplansky**, has signed a cooperation agreement with the Directorate of the National Park of the Galapagos Islands to promote the conservation of the endangered biological diversity there.

Upon the invitation of the Ecuadorian Ministry of Environment and the Directorate of the Galapagos National Park, a delegation from the Center of International

## BGU Salutes its **Friends**



*Aharon Yadlin is congratulated by Prof. Menahem Ben-Sasson, President of Hebrew University*

- **Aharon Yadlin**, Vice-Chairperson of BGU's Executive Committee and a former Minister of Education of Israel, received the Samuel Rothberg Prize for Jewish Education from Hebrew University during its recent International Board of Governors meeting.
- Member of the BGU Board of Governors, the honorable **Billy Joel** from Aventura, Florida, was honored with the Israel 65 Award from the Israel Bonds at an impressive ceremony in the presence of Israeli Minister of Culture and Sport Limor Livnat.
- **Amal Abu Sif**, a doctoral student in the Charlotte B. and Jack J. Spitzer Department of Social Work, was invited to address a UN conference on women's rights in March on topics such as honor killings in the Palestinian-Israeli community and education for Bedouin from unrecognized villages.

Photo: Hezi Hogeia / Hebrew University

Conventions of the Blaustein Institutes for Desert Research visited the Galapagos for work meetings and field excursions. The project will be conducted by joint Ecuadorian-Israeli teams, pursuing novel nature management schemes that will help rehabilitate natural ecosystems by developing agricultural methodologies and water technologies, which will increase local agricultural production and reduce the dependency of the islands on the imports of fresh produce from the mainland.

In addition to Novoplansky, the delegation

included **Prof. Uriel Safrieli**, who heads the Center of International Conventions at the BIDR, **Dr. Alon Ben-Gal**, a desert agriculture expert from the Volcani Center of the Israeli Ministry of Agriculture, **Prof. Aliza Fleischer**, an agricultural economist from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and **Prof. Noam Weisbrod** of the Zuckerberg Institute for Water Research, BIDR. Novoplansky is a member of the Mitrani Department of Desert Ecology, Swiss Institute for Dryland Environmental and Energy Research, BIDR.



## Aaron Klug Integrated Centre for Biomolecular Structure and Function Dedicated



UK Ambassador to Israel H.E. Matthew Gould

The Aaron Klug Integrated Centre for Biomolecular Structure and Function was dedicated this spring in the presence of British Nobel Laureate Prof. Klug's family and British Ambassador to Israel H.E. Matthew Gould. It will become part of the National Institute for Biotechnology in the Negev (NIBN) at BGU.

"The Klug Integrated Centre for Biomolecular Structure and Function (KICBS) will be a center of excellence for structural biology studies and thus a focal attraction for scientists in Israel and around the world," says Prof. Varda Shoshan-Barmatz, director of the NIBN, who worked tirelessly to create the new center.

It is named after Nobel laureate Prof. Aaron Klug, OM FRS, an outstanding

structural biologist who pioneered the crystallography of biological assemblies and was the founder of three-dimensional electron microscopy. Sir Aaron contributed substantially to the development of BGU, and he is a member and former director of the Medical Research Council Laboratory of Molecular Biology in Cambridge, UK.

Prof. Raymond A. Dwek, CBE FRS, of Oxford University, introduced Gould and noted that both Gould and Klug had expressed publicly the same values of scientific collaboration and academic freedom.

"Any ambassador would be delighted to pay tribute to Prof. Klug and to be at an event that sets in stone the link between Britain and Israel," Gould told the audience. The Klug Centre will create a unique

environment to facilitate state-of-the-art research in structural biology by providing both the intellectual framework and the physical and organizational infrastructure required for performing high-level interdisciplinary research that combines various structural biology approaches ranging from atomic to cellular resolution. For example, the interdisciplinary concept will help elucidate the atomic structure of proteins, which could lead to better inhibitors, among many other research avenues.

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## SPOTLIGHT ON SCHOLARSHIPS

[www.bgu.ac.il/associates](http://www.bgu.ac.il/associates)

# A Message from the President

BGU students come from every sector of Israeli society. The University provides undergraduates with need-based scholarships, often given to new immigrants and residents of Israel's disadvantaged peripheral areas, opening up life-changing opportunities.

The University's diverse research activities are fueled by BGU's cadre of graduate students and post-doctoral fellows. Merit-based fellowships are a crucial tool in attracting top students to BGU.

The University devotes a significant share of its operational budget to fund scholarships and fellowships, as studies consistently show that the best way to improve one's life is through higher education.

As part of our founding mandate, all undergraduate scholarship recipients participate in some kind of community service, creating a unique atmosphere that enhances the spirit of social responsibility and personal accountability. In the spirit of David Ben-Gurion, "We seek to build a scientific research and teaching center which will be a source of moral inspiration and courage, rousing people to a sense of mission, noble, creative and fruitful."

Funding for scholarships and fellowships comes from our friends and supporters in Israel and around the world. We salute you for your ongoing support!

Thank you,

*Rivka*

Prof. Rivka Carmi



## A Hands-On Approach

For Esther and Michel Halpérin, the Keren Moshe Scholarship Fund is a way of life. Support of the University is a Halpérin family affair, begun by Michel's father, Vladimir, enhanced by Esther and Michel, and carried on by their son, Lionel, who recently joined the Board of Governors. Michel has served on the Board of Governors and as President of the Swiss Friends of BGU for the past 25 years.

Esther is the driving force behind the Keren Moshe Scholarship Fund and its charismatic spokesperson. "Our goal is to nurture social and political responsibility." The Fund's financial support is linked to a commitment by the students to give back to the community. "Our scholarship recipients know that each of us must bring something to the table," she says. Over 100 students participate each year in the leadership training program under the auspices of the Community Action Department directed by Vered Sarousi-Katz. It features skills-based training to enhance students' leadership skills and develop a sense of communal responsibility.

### **Maor Kabessa — You Find Time for What is Important**

As a fourth-year medical student, Maor Kabessa is already making a difference. With enthusiasm, he states, "Beyond becoming an MD, I want to make a difference in Israeli society." In addition to the demands of his medical studies, Maor works at Keren Moshe and volunteers daily at *Manof* ("Impetus"), an organization dedicated to mentoring at-risk teens. How does he do it all? "You find the time for what's important."

Growing up in the rural Galilee region, Maor thanks Keren Moshe for exposing him to all walks of life. He also appreciates the program's focus on social gaps, ideas for change and leadership, and commitment to students. "Keren Moshe invests in us and challenges us. No other fund matches that kind of pioneering spirit."

# A Helping Hand Makes a Difference

Head of the School of Pharmacology and Advisor to the Rector for Arab Student Affairs Prof. Riad Agbaria's personal Horatio Alger story demonstrates that a "helping hand" can change people's lives.

Agbaria was "discovered" by the late Prof. Yaacov Tal of the Department of Life Sciences while working as an electrician in his house. Under the professor's tutelage, Agbaria completed his entrance exams and began working in Tal's laboratory. What was his attraction to biology? "I wanted to touch God," he says.

God seems to have reciprocated. After completing his PhD at BGU, Agbaria went on to do a post-doc in the US at the prestigious National Institutes of Health, and became a founding member of the School of Pharmacology, a professor, and department head.

He quickly noticed the absence of Arab students at the Joyce and Irving Goldman Medical School. Since then, Agbaria has been driven by a personal mission to actively recruit Bedouin students to the school. The success of recruitment efforts, such as the Medical Cadet program, was enhanced by the launch of the Robert H. Arnow Center for Bedouin Studies and Development, which ensured scholarship funding and retention tutoring for qualified students. The results have gone far beyond anyone's expectations.

"These scholarships have completely changed the world for Bedouin students," says Agbaria. At BGU there are now some 500 Arabic speaking students. The University's preeminent role is reflected by the fact that nearly 80 percent of those staffing Bedouin medical clinics are BGU graduates.

Agbaria has long been associated with championing education among Bedouin youth, and he is now involved with helping others in the periphery, including Jewish youth from rural communities and Haredi women.

"The model works," he concludes. "One person helping another has become a real force for change."



Ivan Halaj  
and his  
son Steve



Michael  
Brusilovsky

## Halaj Family

Ivan Halaj, a long-time supporter of BGU from Rancho Palos Verdes, CA, established the Halaj Foundation Scholarship Endowment Fund to help students attain their educational goals. Ivan admired David Ben-Gurion's vision to make the desert bloom and appreciates the important role BGU plays in the realization of this dream for the whole country.

### Michael Brusilovsky – Dedicating his Time to Science

Michael Brusilovsky emigrated at age 15 from Odessa with his family, not knowing a word of Hebrew. Two years later he graduated from an Israeli public high school with honors and enlisted in the army as a field medic.

With the help of an Impact Scholarship from the Association for the Wellbeing of Israel's Soldiers (AWIS), Michael did his first degree at BGU in Laboratory Sciences. Afterwards, he was awarded a research grant at the Fox Chase Cancer Center in Philadelphia, PA, where he worked on a genome screen designed to isolate small molecules expressed by tumor cells that could later be identified and targeted by the body's own immune system.

Michael is a big proponent of personalized medicine. "Within every patient lies the cure to his or her disease." The Halaj fellowship has enabled Michael to forge ahead in this area while pursuing his master's degree at BGU.

When he's not in the lab, Michael volunteers for the Israel Cancer Society and Magen David Adom, and also tutors high school students in the sciences. "The Halaj fellowship covers 120 percent of my tuition, which enables me to dedicate 100 percent of my time to science, both in the lab at BGU and another 20 percent in the field as a volunteer. I'd like to personally thank Ivan Halaj for allowing me to do so."

## Savitt Family

In 2008, Sheila and Leonard Savitt came to volunteer in Israel and fell in love with BGU. Without even waiting to return home, they established a Scholarship Endowment Fund in memory of Sheila's parents, Maurice and Sylvia Young.

This spring they went one step further, bringing their extended family – four children, children-in-law and grandchildren, totaling 15 people – to BGU to meet their current scholarship recipient and to see firsthand how supporting others to acquire an education can enrich one's own life.

During their visit Sheila mentioned her lifelong regret that she couldn't afford to finish her university studies. She stressed the importance of higher education as the "gift that someone carries with them for a lifetime."

"We are here as a family, as it is the most powerful way to absorb these values," the Savitts said. "We want our children and grandchildren to have first-hand knowledge of the power and value of their gifts."

### Inbar Shtutman – A Gift for a Lifetime

From Kibbutz Dvir in the Negev, Inbar now lives in Beer-Sheva, where she is a second-year student at BGU, studying geography, environmental studies and management in hopes of a future in the field of clean-tech.

Besides studying, Inbar works at the Ilse Katz Institute for Nanoscale Science and Technology and volunteers at the Perach ("Flower") mentoring program. As a "big sister" in the program, she can be found each Friday at a local school helping third-graders master basic skills. "It's something to look forward to every week and a much-needed break from my school work. Plus, the kids are great!"

Thankful to the Savitts, Inbar says the scholarship is a great help to her. "Without it, I wouldn't be able to finance my studies – I feel very lucky!"



Sheila and Leonard Savitt with Inbar Shtutman

## Baeloha Family

Tammy and Elifaz Baeloha, from the Upper Galilee, established a scholarship fund in memory of their son, Nadav, who fell in the Battle of Maroun al-Ras in the 2006 Lebanon War at the age of 21. The scholarships are intended for students who served in IDF combat units, such as Egoz, the elite Golani unit Nadav was so proud to be part of.

### Matan Dahan – Hope for the Global Village

"After meeting the Baeloha family, learning about Nadav, how dedicated he was to his unit and his bravery in battle, I'm sorry I never got to know him," said Matan Dahan. "With this scholarship I'm continuing the path that he had planned to take. Receiving a scholarship in his name is a great honor and makes me even more determined to excel."

Matan grew up in central Israel. His father worked for the Jewish Agency and his mother was one of the top Hebrew teachers in the country. Matan, who served as a commander in the elite Sayeret Nachal unit, is studying geography and chemistry, "in hopes of addressing the environmental challenges facing Africa through technology."

Besides his classwork, Matan volunteers at a neighborhood sustainability center, a local kindergarten and a petting zoo. The Baeloha scholarship, combined with an army grant, covers most of his expenses, allowing him to pursue his interests and studies. "I'd like to thank the Baeloha family for their generosity – there's no better way to honor Nadav's memory."



Matan Dahan



Yaron Samimi

## The ISEF Foundation

Since its founding in 1977 by the late Edmond J. Safra and his wife Lily, together with the Foundation’s President, Nina Weiner, ISEF has worked tirelessly to narrow Israel’s socio-economic gap by supporting higher education for gifted students from disadvantaged backgrounds and facilitating their educational opportunities. Hundreds of students at BGU have benefitted from their support and the Foundation’s methodology, which combines scholarship grants with required community service, as well as training in leadership and social awareness.

ISEF is currently supporting 32 undergraduate, 12 master’s and seven PhD students at BGU in coordination with the Dean of Students Office.

### Yaron Samimi – Better Working Together

Yaron, who’s living in the desert development town of Netivot, has several full-time jobs. He’s the father of three small children. He’s also the director of Reshet – a nation-wide afternoon program for special needs kids, and he heads a regional consumer cooperative of 2,600 families.

With a BA in Management from Sapir Community College, Yaron is now completing his master’s in the Mandel Social Leadership Program. How does he do it? “With the right time management.” The ISEF scholarship enables Yaron to dedicate his time “to studying instead of working to cover tuition.” A keen listener, Yaron appreciates ISEF’s “Better Together” program, which meets twice a month in underprivileged neighborhoods: “They tell us what really needs to be done, so we’re not just whitewashing walls.”

Coming from a traditionally observant background, Yaron grew up in a home where having extra guests at the table was the norm. “I learned an important lesson from my mom that has stayed with me until today, in whatever I do,” he says. “Whatever you give comes back to you tenfold.”

He elaborates: “I’m a people person. That, combined with the social, economic and management skills I’m learning at BGU – can help promote mutual understanding among the many different communities in Israel. Thanks to ISEF, I see it happening already!”

### Shir Nehemya – Crossing That Bridge

Shir Nehemya has both a heart-wrenching and heart-warming story. By the age of 22, both her parents had tragically died, leaving behind a family of three. Shir and her older brother, Shai, applied for, and received legal guardianship of their teenage brother, Omer. Together, they care for him in their Kiryat Gat home, supported by a network of family and friends.

When Shir graduated high school with honors, Shai, who was enrolled at a community college at the time, insisted that she apply to university. When Shir brought up the matter of tuition, Shai answered, “We’ll cross that bridge when we get to it.”

The BGU Scholarship Committee helped Shir “cross that bridge” by supplementing the ISEF award with a Dean’s List grant and work in the Perach Big Brother/Big Sister mentoring program. Between her work and home demands and a double major in psychology and management, Shir must often multi-task – a skill she also relied upon while serving in counter-intelligence in the air force.

BGU was Shir’s first choice because it was within driving distance of two important places – Kiryat Gat, where she lives and works (on the assembly line at Micron, a provider of memory chips) and Jerusalem, the location of Omer’s boarding school, where she regularly attends parent-teacher meetings and goes to “hang out” with her kid brother.

When you talk to Shir about the ISEF program, she becomes animated: “It’s fun – they invest in you with weekly get-togethers and a real hands-on approach. I meet others like me and they’re special, wonderful people. I’m grateful to ISEF because, without the scholarship, I never could have come here.”



Shir Nehemya

*You can make a difference in someone’s life. To fund a scholarship or fellowship, please contact us at [donors@bgu.ac.il](mailto:donors@bgu.ac.il) or through your nearest Associates office.*

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